



*International Journal of Humanity Studies*  
<http://e-journal.usd.ac.id/index.php/IJHS>  
Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

## **SHE THINKS, HE SAYS: THE VOICE OF THE OTHER IN NOBEL LAUREATES' GENDERED LITERATURE**

**Regie Panadero Amamio**

Mindanao State University, Philippines

Silliman University, Philippines

correspondence: [rui101519@yahoo.com](mailto:rui101519@yahoo.com)

<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.v6i2.5426>

received 27 November 2022; accepted 1 March 2023

### **Abstract**

The gendered language system is often used in literary works to present distinct character perspectives however, the issue of representation is accentuated when a writer presents a perspective of a different gender. Kawabata Yasunari and Gabriel Garcia Marquez who depicted female perspectives in their stories, have to face the issue of reliability of representation: theirs is argued as a patriarchal perception of a female's perspective. Employing Spivak's argument in *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, this paper positioned her statement as "through the perspective of the West (men), subaltern (women) become/s dependent on them (men) to speak for their condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves." This paper discussed the gendered language by examining the characters' uncertain finitude utilizing Asher-Greve's established gender markers to identify gender associations. With the stories of the two Nobel Laureates, this paper has established that through exploring the narrators' usage of gendered language, both writers have inadvertently revealed their own male biases. The narrators of both writers turned out to be the voice of the other not because they have truthfully and successfully spoken for the marginalized; instead, they have become estranged voices of the subjects they are supposed to represent. Hence, the voices that cry for connection and understanding.

Keywords: Asher-Greve's gender markers, gendered language, Spivak's subaltern

### **Introduction**

Gender refers to the socially-constructed characteristics of women and men, such as norms, roles, and relationships of and between groups of women and men (WHO in Newman, 2021). As Butler (2004) puts it, gender is a kind of doing, an incessant activity, a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. As such, it takes shape through interactions with others – a gendered dimension to interactions emerges rather than being assumed at the outset. Moreover, gender is not an attribute of individuals but a way of making sense of transactions. Therefore, it exists not in persons but in transactions; that is why, it is conceptualized as a verb, not a noun (Crawford, 1995).

Since the concept of gender is believed to vary from society to society and can be changed, it is then viewed as a potential site of struggle over

preconceived constraints in roles. It is seen as being infused with the characteristics of the wider social milieu rather than as a variable that needs to be studied in isolation. It is mainly through interaction that one's sense of self is shaped since individuals understand how masculinity or femininity is constituted within a specific context. Thus, gender is not part of one's essence (what one is) but rather, an achievement (what one does) as claimed by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003). With this, gender is not only understood as a set of practices through which people construct and claim identities but is also about managing social relations.

Moreover, institutional and contextual constraints determine the type and form of identity and linguistic routines which an individual considers possible within interaction and that others feel are available (Mills and Mullany, 2011). Language is inclusive in this particular context. Feminists have long argued that the use of language (that produced sexist language) can have real-world consequences for gender relations and the relative status of men and women. Recent researches suggest that grammatical gender can shape how people interpret the world around them along gender lines (Boroditsky, 2009). Therefore, as long as language exists, the distinction between male and female is ever present within it.

Stahlberg, Braun, Irmen and Sczesny (2007) presuppose that there are no languages which do not distinguish between or among genders at all, directing linguists and psychologists to believe that gender may be so fundamental to social organization and social structure that linguistic means to this category are indispensable for speech communities. This suggests that language not only reflects the conventions of culture and a particular pattern of thoughts, but systems of language can shape one's cognitive understanding of the world (Boroditsky, 2009).

Given recent research tying gender in language to gendered perceptions of the world (Boroditsky, Schmidt and Phillips, 2003), one could infer that when language constantly calls attention to gender distinctions by discriminating between masculine and feminine nouns and pronouns—as is the case in gendered languages—that individuals may be more apt to draw distinctions between men and women. If language plays a role in how people organize their beliefs about gender, then this gendered language system also plays a role in making a distinction in attitudes, and behavioural practices about the role and status of men and women (Prewitt-Freilino, Caswell, and Laakso, 2011) which are often used in many literary works especially when writers try to present their character's perspective.

Gendered language is a language which according to Loland (2010) of which awakens associations to gender and thus constructs ideas of gender. For it to be identified as gendered language gender must however be part of the source domain, if not, no association is possible. The list of gender markers takes its point of departure in Julia Asher-Greve's observations on representations of the human body in written and pictorial documents in Mesopotamian culture and differentiates three concepts of a human body (sexed, gendered and ambiguous or asexual) in her article, *The Essential Body: Mesopotamian Conceptions of the Gendered Body* (2002).

The use of Asher-Greve's gender markers is essential to bridge what Jakobson (1959) states in his article that the genders of nouns have deeper meanings in specific contexts such as mythologies or similar literary genres where this grammatical feature assumes a communicative function. Say, Helen Benedict in her fictional work, *Sand Queen* (2011). Her employment of the first-person pronoun 'I'

creates ambiguity for it does not reveal the gender of the character-narrator. It is only then in the succeeding parts of the story does the reader find out that it refers to Brady when the narrator-character denotatively reveals her female gender by describing how the sight of a female soldier will win hearts and minds. Here, Benedict allows gender to be produced through narrative processes (Moosavi, Ghandeharion and Sabbagh, 2019). The presence of the ambiguity of gender through the use of the pronoun 'I' is then removed with the use of gender markers.

In presenting the character's perspective and gendered language at the fore, the issue of representation is accentuated (Dogan, 2018). For instance, a male writer presents perspectives for his male and female characters. One may question the truthfulness of representation he may provide especially in presenting the voice of women. Here enters Spivak's argument in her essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (2010) that a scholar (man) cannot speak for a female (subaltern/of inferior rank) since the actual voice is missing and his representation is from his perspective; this so-called female's representation only conveys the teller's vision rather than the real version of the story. Therefore, the metaphorical meaning obtained from the literature written by male writers is claimed to be a patriarchal perception of a female's perspective - not true to women's experience and filtered through a male perspective to lift male standards and emphasize male importance.

Williamson (2001) denounces feminist stereotyping stating that feminist criticism has felt the need to emphasize how hard it is for men really to imagine what women experience. It is quick to smell pre-emption rather than legitimate empathy whenever male writers attempt to present a female point of view. They fear male writers will perpetuate stereotypes, offer up straw men or rather straw women, so that the patriarchal side can have the last word, or at best, steal insights from women writers who deserve the chance to express themselves.

Male writers and Nobel laureates, Kawabata Yasunari (1899-1972) and Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) are some of those who attempted to write female perspectives in their stories. Besides the local acknowledgement of their ingenuity in their countries of origin, Japan and Colombia respectively, are internationally recognized for their ability to depict sensitively complex and at times controversial aspects of their societies, which are often perceived as strongly patriarchal and traditional cultures. These make their stories and characters of special interest, specifically their depiction of female heroes. Both Kawabata and Marquez as male writers have to face and answer the challenge and issue of the reliability of the representation of their female characters. Therefore, this paper has explored the argument of the truthfulness of the representation of males against female thoughts coming from male writers who have a male perspective. Since both writers depict sensitive and complex subject matters in their stories, this paper discussed the gendered language by examining the characters' uncertain finitude and the shadows of loneliness utilizing Asher-Greve's established gender markers to identify gender associations. In the end, with Kawabata's stories, *The Mole* (1940) and *One Arm* (1963) and Marquez' *Eva is Inside Her Cat* (1948) and *The Woman Who Came at Six O'clock* (1950), this paper has either agreed or refuted Spivak's concept.

## **Method**

This is a qualitative study that utilizes content analysis based on Spivak's (2010) argument in her essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* She positioned her concept of the "subaltern," which was first coined by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* (1971) to depict "social groups on the margins of history." Her concept challenges the Western perspective and knowledge as they tend to construct identities for third-world people. Her argument stands on the idea that this subaltern does not have a voice and those with the power to speak (West), speak for those who cannot (Morton, 2003).

Spivak's argument is crucial in this paper since her depiction of the subaltern has become a generic term for those considered as the voices of the Other (marginalized) especially the depiction of women in history. Spivak states that through the perspective of the West, subaltern becomes dependent on them (2010). Metaphorically in this study, her statement is positioned as "through the perspective of the West (men), subaltern (women) become/s dependent on them (men) to speak for their condition rather than allowing them to speak for themselves." In this metaphor as well affirms Spivak's claim that if the subaltern is placed as female, she is even more deeply in the shadow because in the context of colonial production (metaphor of patriarchy), she has no history and has little voice or no voice at all. Asher-Greve's established gender markers categorized into three: *explicit or sexed* – physiological sex markers; *implicit or gendered* – socio-cultural gender elements; and, *non-gender specifics*, are also used to identify gender associations.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The works of Nobel laureates, Kawabata and Marquez, present and depict perspectives of female characters in which the appropriateness of portrayal and depiction is challenged in this study given that both writers are males.

#### ***Women and Beauty in Kawabata's Stories***

In Kawabata's stories, as he tries to present his narrator's perspective, gender markers are explicitly employed to reveal the gender of the narrator-character as well as the phantoms of human relationships and connection that haunts him/her. In *One Arm* (1963), a story that begins with a young woman who removes her right arm and gives it to a man (narrator-character) to keep for the night, revolves around the thoughts and actions of the narrator-character as he takes it home. What happens thereafter expresses the narrator's thoughts as well as his perceived thoughts of the young woman (the one who lent him the arm).

The story uses associations or certain markers to construct ideas of gender. The narrator is revealed as a male through his own implied description, for instance when he said, "*She had sensed that I thought her beautiful, and so she lent me her right arm for the roundness there at the shoulder (p.105).*" The 'she' he refers to is a prostitute. This implies that the man frequents a pleasure house (as many masculine men do which is a socio-cultural construction) and has taken a different interest in a young beauty. The prostitute senses this particular interest and resolves to lend her arm instead. She is young but the narrator knows that she is far more mature in her experience with men. This keen observation of the narrator bespeaks the extent of his experience with women. Further, the narrator himself uses signifiers to exact ideas of gender. He illustrates the girl's arm to belong to a beautiful Occidental girl, rare in Japan, and the roundness of her arm makes him

feel the roundness of her body. Her fingernails possess strange beauty as if they belonged to no human creature. Thus, he stresses that her features are comparable to nothing else.

The narrator's further description of the arm treats it as an entire individual – a woman. For instance, when he successfully took the arm home, he regards the arm as that girl who watches him change. He was coy believing he is being watched by a real person, "*Never before had a woman watched me undress in my room* (p.116)." The 'permission' given by the arm to change the arm for his own, he reckons as the voice of a woman who had decided to give herself to him and when the arm sleeps peacefully beside him, he thinks of it as a woman who sleeps peacefully beside her man/husband.

The narrator is occupied in both expressing himself and at the same time in interpreting a woman's possible reaction, making visible his uncertain finitude. He tries to present himself as masculine but being the man he is (who has slept with many women), looms a shadow of loneliness. His encounter with the prostitute gives readers access to explore the narrator's uncertainties and loneliness. When she lent her arm to him, it gives him the joy (of companionship) that he longs to feel.

At first, the narrator tried his gentlest ways to assure the arm is cared for. He thought of having connected to the girl's longing as well. He and the girl may have understood each other's longing but, the enticement of his fantasy to have a union with the arm overpowers him. In a trance, he removes his right arm and substituted it with the girl's. With his concern for the arm's welfare, he even worries if there would not be unpleasantness when the arm was returned to the girl, with the dirty male blood flowing through it. But, his fantasy is momentary and he is awakened to something repulsive – his arm is back on his shoulder. He awoke screaming. The act he thought was like '*murder upon a sudden, diabolic impulse.*' The narrator finds the girl's arm lying at the foot of the bed, flung palm up into the heap of the blanket. The outstretched fingers are not moving and are faintly white in the dim light. This suggests that what he thought the night before foreshadows the tragedy of the young woman (as an arm) or an arm (as a woman), "*Her arm, nails, fingers – more translucent than delicate shell, than a thin petal seemed to hold a dew of tragedy* (p.110)." He mourns this tragic event, embracing the arm "as would a child from whom life was going." He tries to revive it but it seems that he had killed the beauty he thought he possessed.

The events night the narrator has expressed he has no memory of speaking of his unconscious, the sense of otherness he has for the young woman. He is conscious of the affective feeling he has for the arm (woman) but the repulsive one is hidden and only manifests after he tries to have a union with her arm (her body). In his conscious mind, he tries to show respect but, he has not connected to her perhaps because the woman is the voice of the other. Therefore, the narrator has never reached her longings. He wants all the more to touch her fingertips (through his association, he might mean to touch her body) but he said himself that he held back because of his solitude. This means that even with the presence of the arm (the young woman), it has not quenched his longing for company. After all his tender gestures toward the arm, comes the revolting feeling towards her as she is a prostitute, "*She was a woman on whose body few tender spots could be expected to remain* (p.111)." Kawabata often depicts beauty through his women subjects. He

always depicts them akin to dolls (ornaments that exist to be looked at) – apprehending beauty. Any attempt to possess the beauty encapsulated in an individual (in this case, the arm of the beautiful prostitute) leads to disastrous consequences (Williams, 2016). Moreover, he speaks of his conviction through his narrator-character that communication and connection between people – especially between men and women are ultimately unattainable. Thus, this conviction only brings feelings of resignation and sadness to man.

In *The Mole (1940)*, the narrator-character is revealed as a woman named Sayoko, in particular, a wife. The manner she narrates her story is in epistolary form, a letter to her husband asking and pleading with him to understand her love and suffering brought by a misunderstanding of her mole. She gives the readers access to her thoughts, her inner feelings, her sadness, and her longing for her husband's love and acceptance. Everything the readers see and learn about the other characters is filtered through the point of view of Sayoko.

The mole plays a vital role in the couple's relationship as she believes it represents her sense of otherness – the wall that stands against her and her husband's love. She said, her habit of touching the mole particularly, the manner in which she touches it, precipitates this issue. She narrates, "*I brought my left arm around it was as though I was warding you off, as though I was embracing myself. I have never been cruel to him (p.17).*" This issue about her mole took a toll on her as far as she narrates what her mother had told her, "*You're not as good-looking as you once were...and that mole used to be rather attractive (p20)*"; and when she looks at her mother, she was as she had always been, plump and fresh-skinned. The narrator, on the other hand, has aged fast after getting married. In her narration, she recalls the times she touches her mole and laments that what she can clearly remember was the cold tears in her eyes because every time she touches it, all she thought was her (estranged) husband.

When touching her mole gets the nerve of her husband, she suggests ways he must do to help her curb the habit. She suggests that the next time he sees her doing it, he should slap her hand, slap her face even. In turn, she allows herself to become an object of violence. With her approval, he then starts to beat and kick her all because of touching her mole.

The narrator-character only guesses her husband's thoughts about her – how they fell apart and how he ended up becoming violent toward her. She is not even sure of her knowledge about her husband and the whole story (in a form of a letter to him) wishes her to know him better and his thoughts on her. At one point, Sayoko's narration hints at justifying her husband's violence as only the result of her failure to connect to his feelings. At first, she thinks that his hitting has brought her a sudden feeling of release. She seems happy to see the look in his eyes as he watches her try to smooth her hair with her bound hands (to avoid fingering her mole). She blames her failure that destroyed their marriage, "*over and over I ask myself whether the gesture you so disliked might not have been a confession of a love that I could not put into words (p.23).*" Sayoko until the end of her letter laments that she has never captured what her husband might wholly think of her and what he truly feels about her.

Sayoko as a female narrator-character has as well, failed to narrate what she wants her husband to understand about her. Is it only about her mole or about her as a woman who has forgotten the warmth of her husband's love? Their desired

relationship, (at least from her perspective, is unrealized) suggests what Williams (2016) points out that in Kawabata's stories, there is always something missing or incomplete in human relationships that call for withdrawal and retreat. In contrast to the narrator-character in the former story that takes pleasure in the arm lent to him and takes it as a representation of a woman, here, the female narrator takes the mole as a symbol of her husband whom she has failed to touch and connect her feelings to. It may be implicit, but the mole used as a gender marker (particularly, non-gender specific) associates it to the physical man, the man she marries, the man she physically has a union with and what makes her be identified as a wife. Her entire narration suggests the loss of the other part of her, the part she has given to her husband – the part that is dependent on a man.

The relationships depicted in the stories may seem to represent the relationship between the writer (male) and his narrators (female and male). In the first story, his narrator (male) has filtered the perspective of another character, the young woman who lent him the arm. His female character is almost passive and it is through being seen and written about by the male narrator that this character has come to possess an unusual consciousness. His male narrator has instead presented an object-like woman, a different kind of beauty and a bit different from real women. The narrator presents somewhat believable inner feelings of himself (male narrator) but has a bit unrealistic presentation of the female character. In turn, his narrator does quite a monologue where the things he presents are things he experiences alone. In the latter story, Kawabata's narrator is a woman. He tries to create an image of a woman's devastation but with a hint of masculine explanation that inadvertently gives a bit of justification for the husband's violence. The violence stems from the narrator's habit of absentmindedly touching her mole which results in misunderstanding (at least from the perspective of the narrator). Throughout the story (in an epistolary form), the wife attempts to reflect on her so-called 'bad habit.' She tries to find out the reason for her pain and suffering from a happy-turned-estranged marriage with her husband. The gravity of the violence that sprang from her bad habit seems to be emphasized as a normal consequence of this misunderstanding and this seems to present that the writer himself has understood the husband better than the female narrator who tells the story. Nonetheless, because of unreachable ends, both narrator-characters get pleasure not from realizing their desire but pursuing the object of it in surrogates (the arm and the mole).

### ***Marquez's Detached Voices: Sympathy or Apathy***

Marquez presents the narrators in the two short stories as uninvolved by the protagonists. As such, he did not use as many gender markers to create association but the way he makes his narrators tell their stories revealed biases on the voices they tried to represent.

In *Eva is Inside Her Cat* (1948), a story that examines and details the journey of a woman in the physical to the metaphysical plane, the narrator is presented as a detached person (voice) who seems to have private knowledge of the protagonist, Eva. Since this narrator here has no gender marker, he is considered a 'he' for convenience. He appears to have known her but at the same time, he or his knowledge may deem unreliable since there is no trace of his relationship with the female protagonist. He claims that Eva has inherited the solitude, curse of sadness,

and pain from her family and has suffered alone; her suffering revolves around her desire to be a happy woman and this has something to do with her physical attribute (not because she is ugly but beautiful). Does a woman suffer because of her beautiful face and body that most women can only imagine having? The narrator emphasizes this matter which includes the protagonist's burden to carry it and suffer even in her metaphysical consciousness.

Notice also how the narrator has made his position regarding her (Eva's) supposed claim of her beauty as useless virtue. He states, "*Maybe she would have been happy if she had had the same lack of grace that same desolate ugliness as her Czechoslovakian friend. She would have better off ugly, so that she could sleep peacefully like any other Christian.*" This detestation of her beauty leads Eva to find a vessel that would go beyond the physical world and transcend toward an environment that is devoid of time – her choice is a cat. In the end, she cannot achieve it since it is past many years and all of her has been forgotten even in her own time.

The depiction of Eva filtered through the narrator's perspective reveals biases of the narrator's knowledge and even discrepancies in his familiarity with Eva's or a woman's thoughts in general. It is highly possible that in this story, Marquez tried to explore the developing feminist ideas of his time guided by his magical realism conundrum. For instance, his portrayal of Eva as a woman is ambiguous. Eva described as beautiful, has never celebrated her beauty instead, treats it as her curse and disease. This particular issue may relate to Beauvoir's (2010) account of the way in which women live their bodies in such an objectified way and as a consequence of a process of internalizing the view of it under the gaze of others. The narrator claims that Eva's beauty is not enhanced but inherited. Eva's hatred toward her appearance is in contrast to the concept that 'women's cultural preoccupation with appearance is a source of wasted effort and expense, a threat to physical and psychological well-being (Rhode, 2016).' Eva has not suffered being forced to the male standard which is what second-wave feminism has tried to dispute - 'women as enslaved by ludicrous beauty standards that they are conditioned to take seriously (Brownmiller, 1984).' As such, the narrator must have meant that what triggered Eva's hatred is her sense of self which Freud argued is, one's bodily ego that dictates the affective and sensory significance with which different parts are invested (Freud, 1923). This means that Eva must have exploited her beauty in the past to try to achieve her advances but these have not given her happiness. Therefore, the hatred she must have felt is probably the result of her offended ego which is not specified by the narrator. Throughout the story, she, again and again, recalls her fear but cannot specify what it is. She only states that it was a strange and unknown fear that comes to her from time to time.

The story, *The Woman Who Came at Six O'clock* (1950) illustrates the gap of understanding between a man and a woman. Jose, the bar owner who constantly gives a woman he called a queen-free dinner, admits to loving her. Queen, who always receives Jose's kindness tries to make use of this opportunity to free herself from a murder she committed. Convincing Jose to bend his routine by lying about the time she arrives at his bar, Jose is revealed to be rigid to agree with her request, thus, is seen as ultimately undependable to the woman he claimed he loves and cares about. The narrator here (like how Marquez has presented in the former short story) is unnamed and is depicted as someone who seems to be knowledgeable of

the two characters. For the convenience of presenting this narrator, he is male in this analysis. He depicts the two characters with an emphasis on the distinction between a male and a female portrayal. At some point, he takes an effort to balance his information of the two. However, no matter how he tries to make it appear that way, the two always end up in a misunderstanding. The naivety of the man, Jose and the overstated idea of the woman, the queen create friction that ended in the untold real message.

When the narrator starts to speak about the story, he immediately draws a line that separates the two characters (queen, experienced and shrewd; and Jose, calm and naive). When she arrives at the bar, the queen has immediately gone down to business and leads Jose to be inquisitive as evident in their exchange of dialogue, *"I didn't notice, Jose said...You still haven't learned to notice anything, said the woman."* Since Jose's life is like a routine, he sees every day as the same, he states, *"Every day the clock says six, then you come in and say you're hungry as a dog and then I fix you something good. The only difference is this: today you didn't say you were as hungry as a dog but today is different...It's true, Jose. Today is different. I didn't come at six today, that is why it's different, Jose (p.59)."* What transpires in this conversation is the contrasting presentation of an image of a woman – a somewhat misplaced marker to be described as 'as hungry as a dog' and a rough description from a man who claimed to have loved her.

Furthermore, the queen persistently pushes him to understand her circumstance, however, only reveals his vacuous nature as depicted in this exchange of dialogue: *"I'll cut off my off my arm if that clock is one minute slow, he said. That's not it, Jose. I didn't come at six o'clock today...I've got a quarter of an hour that says I've been here, the woman said (p.60)."* Jose insists that the queen arrives exactly at six o'clock without even trying to think about the reason behind her insistence. Instead, he becomes annoyed and lets her believe what she wants to, *"Well, if that's the way you want it, you've got a quarter of an hour that says you've been here...after all, what difference does it make, ten minutes this way, ten minutes that way? (p.61)."*

Jose professes his love to the queen in an awkward manner, *"I love you so much that I wouldn't go to bed with you...I love you so much that every night I'd kill the man who goes with you...The fact is I love you so much that I don't like your doing it (p.62)."* To him, love is about caring for the queen, and wishing to make sure she does not get hurt by men she goes out with (although the succeeding conversation reveals that Jose is far too naive even to envisage the despicable ways men treat her). But to the queen, perhaps because she has only experienced men lusting after her, Jose's love makes no sense. It is also apparent that the narrator through the dialogues with the queen that he is genteel in describing her circumstance. She is a prostitute but the narrator has never directly a used marker associating her with that term instead, the term queen, an irony of both her true nature and the way Jose might deem her (his queen but not in capital letters).

When Jose expresses his desire to kill the man who sleeps with her, the queen bursts into mocking laughter, a tone that seems to despise Jose's (empty) concern but at the same time, a realization of her crime. As she tries to hide her crime using Jose, she becomes hopeless as the man fails to connect with her. Queen killed one of the men she sleeps with, an offence coupled with heavy punishment but at the same, she tried to justify her action, *"Don't you think they ought to lay off a woman*

*who kills a man because after she's been with him she feels disgust with him and everyone who's been with her?... you're savage, Jose. You don't understand anything. Come on, tell me that the woman should kill him (p.67).*" In the end, the narrator settles that Jose has never really understood queen though she for the last time insists Jose remember she came to his bar at five-thirty.

### ***On Spivak's Concept and the Voice of the other***

Marquez is known as one of the leading writers of the Latin American Boom, a male-dominated literary period in which his acclaimed novels predominantly explored man's (as patriarch) history, existence and identity depicting the grandness of power of men as makers of culture and as society's founding father has also written works that deliberately or inadvertently portray women perspective. Kawabata, another Nobel laureate is known to have written and explored human sexuality in his acclaimed works and his chief representation of beauty in his oeuvre is women. In his portrayal of women, they are frequently seen and narrated from the perspective of a male protagonist. Hence, it is noteworthy to explore these works using the above concept to examine the reliability and or truthfulness of representation of these women coming from known masculine writers.

As asserted by Lange (2008), men and women have different life experiences; therefore, their writings are as well different. Therefore, there is no way that men can accurately represent the female perspective or present feminist ideals because they have not experienced life as women. This assertion by Lange surely challenges Kawabata's narrators in his two stories. He presents male and female narrators respectively, inviting readers to compare two different perspectives on how both differently depict women. In the former story, the female character is filtered through the point of view of the male protagonist. Readers do not see this female character from her perspective or hear her story in her own words.

Likewise, this kind of women representation coming from a male perspective creates friction between the narrator and the arm (whom he treats as the entire woman character and whom her perspective he also represents). It is evident in his narration that the narrator attempts to show his tenderness for this female character by treating her arm with care and respect but this inadvertently tires him and thus reveals his repulsion towards it. His female character is a prostitute whom he knew to have slept with many men and to have her arm lent to him is the narrator's polite way if not a convenient way to refer to a prostitute having a night with her male client. Perhaps, Kawabata through his narrator tries to bridge miscommunication between the two characters when the narrator successfully replaced her arm with his but it ended up in tragedy when he unconsciously rips her arm from his shoulder and returned his. The narrator described his action as "*murder...diabolic impulse,*" grieving the fact that the connection between them (male and female) is after all unattainable. It seems like Kawabata himself is guilty of the fact that truthfully representing female thoughts is impossible to realize. In the latter story where Kawabata's narrator is a woman, he likewise attempts to represent a woman's pain and suffering. By doing so, however, he reveals partiality towards the male character and thus seems to present that Kawabata has a better understanding and familiarity of the husband rather than the wife who narrates the story. His impartiality here establishes Spivak's claim that 'men never encounter the

testimony of the women's voice-consciousness' therefore, what he narrates are merely representations, produced and structured by the male perspective.

Conversely, Kawabata has revealed his sympathy towards both female characters in the two stories by one, depicting the wife in *The Mole* to have mustered her courage in searching for the meaning of her life independent from his male character and two, depicting his male character (narrator) in *One Arm* as remorseful after learning of his roughness toward the arm when he rips it from his shoulder. Kawabata seems to present misunderstanding and disconnection of male and female with an attempt to understand them that is why he treats the obsessions of a dysfunctional protagonist with compassion.

Marquez uses detached narrators to depict his characters, especially the women whom he seems to have shown his sympathy with. His representation of female thoughts challenges his understanding of female ideals. The issue raised in the first story is the female character's (Eva) suffering that is caused by her beauty. Beauty is a virtue but the narrator spells it on behalf of Eva as sickness. If indeed, Marquez explored the ideas of feminism during his time, he must have made the justification for his narrator's claim; instead, he only invited speculation that would question his knowledge of women's ideals. In the latter story, Marquez presents two active characters; one is complex, and the other is naive; one is a woman and the other is a man. His narrator serves as a bridge for the two characters to have a middle ground and should therefore understand each other.

Unlike the passive female character of Kawabata in *One Arm*, the female character that Jose calls queen is a very active character who attempts to use her charm and Jose's favour to get away from her crime. Marquez has almost created a femme fatale character but the problem with the success of this manifestation lies in his structured male character. Jose is slow-witted to connect with the queen's narrative. Throughout their conversation, Jose has shown nothing but misinterpretation of the queen's cry for help. His claim to have loved the queen has only become a shallow tale – like those painful stories the queen had with the men she has slept with. With Marquez' attempt to represent a female perspective, he was able to create a battered woman forced by the circumstance of her time but also a woman who endeavours to overcome her fate. Unlike Eva who tries to get away from her life and live in an animal's body to end her suffering, the queen is a strong woman who masters a man and who challenges the power of men forced upon her.

Spivak's warning to male writers who attempt to represent women with their male perspective is indeed a sound argument. She stated that by prohibiting Indian widows (women in general) to practice sati, men are only prohibiting their freedom to choose (Ross, 2009). Similarly, male writers who write about women from their own (male) perspective, therefore, silence the women by claiming to stand for and to speak for her/their experience. Their attempts to write for women only revealed many biases from these male writers. Through Kawabata's stories, he has revealed his feelings of resignation and sadness. His is a complicated narrative of wandering and powerless souls. What looms in his stories is the strange way of depicting love as something that is experienced alone (the male narrator in *One Arm* and the wife, Sayoko in *The Mole*).

For Kawabata, this is love not as dialogue (communicated by both a man and a woman), but as a monologue (filtered thoughts of the woman through the narrator's perspective and Sayoko's epistolary-style narrative). His stories revealed

Japanese' pervading subject of 'broken individualism' symbolized by the pronoun 'I' or *watakushi* stories develop into an obsession of self-negation where the *mono no aware* or 'sadness of things passing away' becomes a standard for Kawabata's stories. Marquez's stories revealed the subject of masculinity shared by writers of the Latin American Boom of which he is an integral part. He shows an attempt to sympathize with Eva's struggle and offered her a way to escape her predicament but in the end, it was a struggle for his narrator to connect and justify the pain of his female character. However, even if Marquez is known to portray his male characters with grandness and power, his male character in the latter story becomes a metaphor for men who struggle to fully express their feelings.

### Conclusion

The narrators of both writers turn out to be the voice of the other not because they have truthfully and successfully spoken for the marginalized; instead, they have become estranged voices of the subjects they are supposed to represent, hence the voices that cry connection and understanding. It turns out as well that their portrayal and representation of these characters do not directly depict the universal event of their time; rather it depicts one, fragments of the shadow of Spanish imperialism in Colombia and American occupation in Japan that shaped their uncertain finitude and loneliness; and two, the writers' impression on politics of women in Colombia and the sorrow of fleeting beauty of the old Japan.

### References

- Asher-Greve, J. M. (2002). *The essential body: Mesopotamian conceptions of the gendered body*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-0424.00070>
- Beauvoir, S.D. (2010). *The second sex* (C. Borde and S. Malovany-Chevallier, Trans.). London, UK: Vintage
- BoroditskyL. (2009). How does our language shape the way we think? In M. Brockman (Ed.), *What's next? Dispatches on the future of science* (pp. 116–129). New York: Vintage.
- Boroditsky, L., Schmidt, L. A., & Phillips, W. (2003). Sex, syntax, and semantics. In D. Gentner & S. Goldin-Meadow (Eds.), *Language in mind: Advances in the Study of Language and Cognition* (pp. 61–79). Cambridge: MIT. [https://web.stanford.edu/class/linguist156/Boroditsky\\_ea\\_2003.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/class/linguist156/Boroditsky_ea_2003.pdf)
- Brownmiller, S. (1984). *Femininity* (pp. 88-89). New York: Linden Press/Simon & Schuster
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing gender*. London: Routledge
- Crawford, M. (1995). *Talking difference: On gender and language*. New York: Sage Publications
- Doğan, T. E. T. (2018). Gendered language versus genderless language: Translational challenges in Emma Donoghue's room. In A. Ö. Tarakçıoğlu, K. U. İşısağ, & N. Tekin (Eds.), *From Diversity to Synergy: New Perspectives in English Literature, Linguistics and Translation Studies*. Beau Basiing: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328784427\\_Gendered\\_Language\\_versus\\_Genderless\\_Language\\_Translational\\_Challenges\\_in\\_Emma\\_Donoghue's\\_Room](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328784427_Gendered_Language_versus_Genderless_Language_Translational_Challenges_in_Emma_Donoghue's_Room)

- Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (2003). *Language and gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511791147>
- Freud, S. (1923). The ego and the id. *TACD Journal*, 17(1), 5-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1046171X.1989.12034344>
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Prison notebooks* (pp.131-161). Retrieved on February 12, 2021, from <https://uberty.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/gramsci-prison-notebooks.pdf>
- Jakobson, R. (1959). On linguistic aspect of translation. *On Translation*, p 232-239. Boston: Harvard University Press. Retrieved on January 16, 2021, from <https://web.stanford.edu/~eckert/PDF/jakobson.pdf>
- Lange, C. (2008). Men and women writing women: The female perspective and feminism in U.S. novels and African novels in French by male and female authors. *UW-L Journal of Undergraduate Research XI*. Retrieved on May 16, 2021, from <https://www.wmmsk.com/media/LibraryWomen.pdf>
- Loland, H. (2010). *Gendered God-language in second Isaiah*. Retrieved on December 16, 2020, from [https://www.academia.edu/4210083/Gendered\\_God\\_Language\\_in\\_Second\\_Isaiah?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/4210083/Gendered_God_Language_in_Second_Isaiah?auto=download)
- Mills, S. & Mullany, L. (2011). *Language, gender and feminism. theory, methodology and practice*. New York: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203814666>
- Moosavi, M., Ghandeharion, A. & Sabbagh, M.R.G. (2019). Gendered narrative in female war literature: Helen benedict's sand queen. *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World* 18, 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15692086-12341365>
- Morton, S. (2003). *Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak* (p. 63). London: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444337839.wbelctv2s010>
- Newman, T. (2021). Sex and gender: What is the difference? *Medical News Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/232363#gender>
- Prewitt-Freilino, J. L., Caswell, T. A., & Laakso, E. K. (2011). The gendering of language: A comparison of gender equality in countries with gendered, natural gender, and genderless languages. *Sex Roles*, 66, 268–281. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-0083-5>
- Rhode, D. L. (2016). Appearance as a feminist issue. *SMU Law Review*, 69(4). <https://scholar.smu.edu/smulr/vol69/iss4/2>
- Ross, E. (2009). In can the subaltern speak? *INNERVATE*, 2, 385-391. <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/english/documentsinnervate/09-10/0910rosssubaltern.pdf>
- Spivak, G.C. (2010). *Can the subaltern speak?* New York, USA: Columbia University Press
- Stahlberg, D., Braun, F., Irmen, L., & Sczesny, S. (2007). Representation of the sexes in language. In K. Fiedler (Ed.), *Social communication* (pp. 163–187). New York: Psychology.
- Williams, M. (2016). Beauty & sadness in Yasunari Kawabata. *Japan SPOTLIGHT*, pp. 56-59. Retrieved on March 14, 2021, from <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Beauty+and+Sadness+in+Yasunari+Kawabat+a.-a0444015144>

Williamson, A. (2001). *Introduction. almost a girl: male writers and female identification*. Charlottesville, VA: The University Press of Virginia